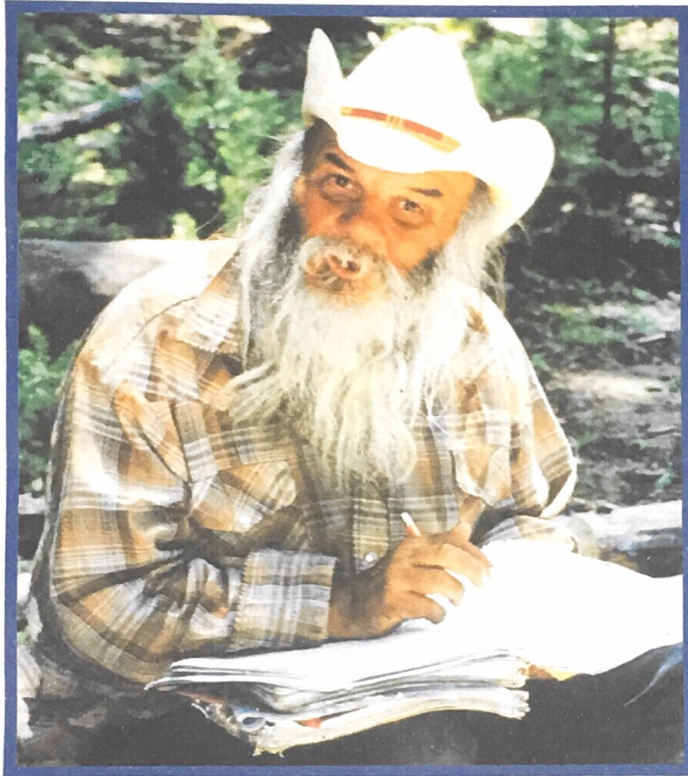




Rainbow Family

Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.*

Scanned in 2018.

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GRASSHOPPER (TRACY) - "A Place to
Go Back To"

- interviewed in 1978, when she was 13
and in 1982, when she was 17

6 pages

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GRASSHOPPER (Tracy) A Place to Go Back To

[Most of the material in this life story comes from an interview with Grasshopper in Jay Sun and Feather's Tipi at the Oregon Gathering in 1978 when she was 13.]

GRASSHOPPER

I was born in 1965 in Baltimore. My mother got pregnant when she was 16 and had me when she was 17. She married my father on her birthday. My father was a singer in a band, then he was a janitor. My mother was a teacher and model and commercial artist then. Her hair was dyed white-blond. My grandmother took care of me. When I was six, my mom and her friend Ecie and me went to Wheeler's Ranch in California. It was new and exciting and I liked it. I had never gotten to see my mother before, because she was always busy in Baltimore.

My mom attempted to teach school at Wheeler's, but it didn't work out. The first few days, we were real excited about it, but after that, it wasn't much fun any more. The kids wouldn't come. I started to first grade in town, but I had to walk seven miles. We didn't have a car. I had to get up before it was even light. I missed a lot of days.

Dirty Dan was sort of my dad at Wheeler's for a while. He lived with my mother. I didn't like him because he was dirty in every way. Every morning he made me go out in the freezing cold and get twigs to start the fire. He gave me the name Grasshopper. I don't know why my mother lived with him, and when I asked her, she doesn't know. She broke up with him.

I tried acid when I was six at Wheeler's. I freaked out and had a really bad trip. My mother didn't know it until I was coming down. You see, I was visiting a place at Wheeler's where it was like a cult. When the ladies had staph, they would cut their sores out. One of them gave me a hit of

acid. I wanted to try it. It was like a hip thing to do - everybody was doing it. Then I thought I was walking into a big, bloody mouth with long fangs. They threw me into a cold pond to bring me out of it, and it only freaked me out more. This guy named Garbage Mike stayed with me and held me. He was neat. Someone went to get my mom. She gave me some Mellow Jello - saffra extract. It's really neat. It doesn't exactly bring you down. It mellows you out and you start hallucinating really beautiful.

I tried acid a bunch more times at Wheeler's and I really enjoyed it those times, because it was always in a good space. My mother was with me all those times. I haven't tried acid again since I was nine in 1974. I have been smoking pot since I was six.

We got a ride and hitched the rest of the way to the Rainbow Gathering in Colorado in 1972. We had to walk into the gathering. There was all these road blocks. In the parking lot at Granby, some lady gave me a little ball of ginseng to eat and it kept me going a long time. I was buzzing. I was running along the railroad tracks after Garrick, ahead of all the grownups. He had the map. He led us and he was going so fast and leaving us all behind. Every time a train or a plane would go by, we would all run hide in the bushes, because they were watching all the entrances. We got lost and we were wandering around and we just kept guessing and we got there.

My mother met JaySun over a pot of beans. He was serving at one of the kitchens. The beans got cold and they were still standing there looking at one another for a long time. Some guy at the gathering told my mother, "You look just like a feather," and JaySun started calling her Feather after that.

JaySun went with us after the gathering to Wheeler's. We stayed there for about a month. JaySun didn't like it. He said he was getting moldy there. So we went to Cuba, New Mexico, and lived at a ranch. We had horses and chickens and stuff like that and I went

to school. I liked that better than Wheeler's. It was super, super cold. It got down to 50 below zero once and the snow was up to my waist. And then my mom had a baby named Shawn White Cloud. The baby had a checkup and was in perfect condition and then on Halloween night, 1973, it died a crib death. It was six weeks old.

I skipped third grade, then we moved to Jemez, New Mexico for the fourth grade. It was all Indian kids in school. It was next to the reservation. The Indians weren't really nice to me. They didn't mix with the white kids. An Indian girl told me I stunk. The school was easy. They babied the Indian kids. The only good thing there was a girl named Kelly. I've been going visiting her when I can.

My mother had another baby named Shawn Blue Skies. He couldn't quite walk when we went to the Arkansas Gathering. We met Freedom there and he came back with us to Reserve, New Mexico. He shot through our pickup engine one night when we were gone and he shot into a big container we had full of gasoline. Anybody he got close to then, he ripped off. It was something psychological. His father was real mean to him. But I think he's coming around. He's mellowed out a whole lot.

That fall Mimi came to stay with us. She gave me a silver flute, which I still have. She was 15 then, but she had been through a whole lot. I went to Baltimore that fall to visit my grandmother. I always go and visit her. I don't mind cities as long as I don't have to live there a long time.

We moved to Luna, New Mexico. I definitely like it better than Reserve. I've got friends there and I like the Mormons there. They're always really friendly. They don't drink coffee or tea or Coca Cola or smoke cigars. They believe in having at least two years' supply of food. I never thought of becoming a Mormon. I know everybody in the town of Luna really well. I like it better than any town I've ever been in. It's quieter, it's prettier than Reserve.

We didn't go to the Montana Gathering because Jayson had a contract with the Forest Service. Me and Mom wanted to go, but it wouldn't have

been very nice to go without Jay Sun.

We found the site for the New Mexico Gathering. We went to the site two times when there was snow and I found an arrowhead there. We didn't go there again until June 15, 1977. I got to meet Wavy Gravy and Henry the Fiddler at that gathering. It was like I'd already known Henry the Fiddler, I had heard so much about him. And I met a bunch of kids who are here at the Oregon Gathering.

I went to see my grandmother in Baltimore. Then Jay Sun and my mom and I moved to Oregon. Jay Sun worked with my mom at a tree farm and I went to school. I like Oregon, but not to live in.

It's too rainy. The dampness gets down in your bones. Mostly because of the weather, we moved back to Luna. I was really glad.

I don't know what I think about all the gatherings. Probably I will be going to them all my life. The gatherings have been there almost all my life. It's always really fun to go. I like the crazy mistakes at the gatherings.

I'm pretty much of a Christian. I was well educated about that side of life. I've read parts of the Bible. I haven't read all of it. I don't think about it much. Krishna and that kind of thing doesn't interest me that much. What's really important to me is to have a stable spot, a place to go back to.

[I interviewed Grasshopper again in 1982. She was 17, living with Jay Sun and Feather in a school bus on their land in Pleasanton, New Mexico near San Francisco Hot Springs. She told me about what had happened since she returned to New Mexico from the Oregon Gathering.]

GRASSHOPPER

I almost got baptized a Mormon. It was that bad. I was little. I believed it. My mom went, "What are you doing?" I practically lived at a Mormon lady's house in Luna. Now the lady thinks I'm hopeless, that I'm a bad influence on her daughter.

The last gathering I went to was West Virginia in 1980. It was kind of fun because I hadn't seen some people in a long

time. Nobody recognized me, I had grown up so much. It was like I was going as a different person. The gathering was pretty muddy. I didn't like it as much as the others. My views on the gathering have changed over the years. I see more the hassles and I get burnt out quicker. But I imagine I'll probably go back to the gathering.

I never had any long-time relationship before Lonnie. I had a lot of things to work through. Little things would get me upset. At first I was uncomfortable around Lonnie's parents, not because they're straight, but because of the way they are. Later on, I practically lived over there. I did live over there.

When I was little, it bothered me that my parents were different, but now that I'm older, I realize you have to take people for what they are. Somehow, people never really teased me and they knew what my family was like. I like to think I won them over. Lonnie's pretty good about the whole thing. He takes everything in stride. Most other people would get put off by strange people they're not used to.

It was kind of nice having my own house in Luna. I don't really mind living in a bus now, except when there's lots of people. I used to take my showers at Lonnie's. Now I go to the motel where I'm a waitress to shower or to the hot springs. We're high class now. We have a telephone. I have an electric curler-but no place to plug it in.

I stayed with my real dad in Baltimore a while. That was the best thing this summer. He's still in a band. They're going up to Canada to play in the Calgary Stampede.

[In May, 1983, Grasshopper graduated from high school. That summer she went to Texas, where her boyfriend Lonnie was living, and lived three months with him. She broke up with him and came back to New Mexico and went to the Southwest Regional Rainbow Gathering in October. She went to the Arizona Regional Gathering in spring, 1984, and then to the California Gathering

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that summer. At present, Grasshopper is a Carpenter in
Tucson, Arizona.]

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